

Chuck Oliver,
District Ranger
Darby Ranger District
P.O. Box 388
Darby, MT

RECEIVED

JUL 25 2007

Ravalli County Commissioners

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District Ranger,

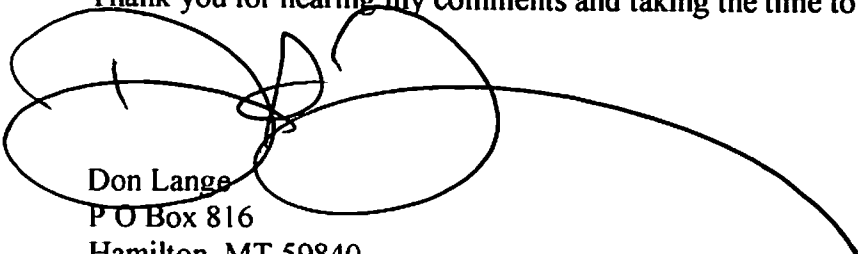
I have to tell you that I am opposed to the proposed gravel mining operation in the Lost Horse Canyon. This is a highly valued recreation area that is very important to local and national citizens alike. Furthermore, there is no recreation "season"; this area is valued for its beautiful setting YEAR ROUND, so a seasonal operation of the pit is not a valid compromise.

On July 23, 2007, I stood at the microphone at the county commission public hearing and accused you and your Forest Service District of failing to properly identify the Lost Horse Corridor as an important recreation area. However, after that meeting, I came to realize that indeed you may not have failed at recognizing the importance of this area as a place of natural beauty, but instead you may have ulterior motives for supporting the proposed mine-such as income driven decision making, protecting your budget, or producing some sort of deliverable to your superiors. In fact, the Missoulian newspaper article of June 23, 2007 states that this mine would provide a cheap source of gravel for the Bitterroot Forest, and you are quoted in that article as saying, "This is an opportunity for us, so we'd use it if we had the chance."

In either case, whether you have failed to identify the area's unique recreational value, or if your motives are dollar-driven, you are not fulfilling your job duties of stewardship of OUR public lands. And if the later is the case, then you are putting your own self interests above the interests of the public that you are hired to serve.

I look forward to hearing your comments as to either 1) why your own personal or agency gains are more important than protecting a public resource that is so highly valued by your constituents, or 2) how you can possibly support the idea that a noisy, disruptive, industrial gravel mining operation with heavy laden trucks on a narrow, icy road used by homeowners and the public is a good idea in one of the most well used, dearly beloved recreation areas in the Bitterroot National Forest.

Thank you for hearing my comments and taking the time to respond,



Don Lange
P O Box 816
Hamilton, MT 59840